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AUTHOR Pepper, Floy C.
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ABSTRACT

Reviewed are four reasons for misbehavior in children, and suggested are methods for adults to deal with the misbehavior. It is explained that motivation can be classified according to the following factors: attention getting mechanism (with passive/active and constructive/destructive patterns); power seeking; revenge seeking; and assumed or real disability (a deficiency displayed in order to be left alone). Adult responses to each of the four types of misbehavior are analyzed. (CL)

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WHY CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Author: Floy C. Pepper

Distributed by: Floy C. Pepper
Coordinator of Program for
the Emotionally Handicapped
Multnomah County Intermediate
Education District

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A Service of the
Multnomah County Intermediate Education District
220 S.E. 102nd Avenue
P.O. Box 16657
Portland, Oregon 97216

WHY CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

Pepper, Floy C., Coordinator, Program for Emotionally Handicapped, Multnomah County Intermediate Education District, P.O. Box 16657, Portland, Oregon 97216.

If the environment in which children grow up was completely harmonious, if adults were perfect and if it was possible to train children properly from birth on, then extreme misbehavior, lack of orderliness and maladjustment would probably not occur. Since these favorable conditions do not exist, children and adults get into an infinite variety of difficulties. It is then necessary to help adults, parents and children to solve their particular problems.

Most adults do not have the slightest idea of why a child misbehaves and are completely in the dark as to the purposes of the child's actions. Children aren't born with a conscience or good manners. Acquiring these is a slow painful process. As a child struggles to learn the ways of the adult world, he is bound to do some things wrong; or as we adults put it, he's bound to misbehave! Learning what society in general and parents in particular expect is a difficult job.

A child desperately wants to belong. If he feels accepted, the child maintains his courage, he presents few problems. He does what the situation requires and gets a sense of belonging through his usefulness and participation. But if he has become discouraged, his sense of belonging is restricted. His interest turns from participation in the group to a desperate attempt at getting personal status. He is often aggressive, demanding and selfish. These traits are misbehavior weapons. When he wants something, he grabs for it. When something is taken away, he is bewildered, disappointed and angry. All his attention is turned toward this end, he may get it through efforts on the useless side.

Dr. Lydia Sicher, in her article "Education for Freedom"[1] stated: "The child experiences life as static and lives it "as if" above were always above and below always below. This false belief in constancy of direction, one of the many misapprehensions in our early,experience, is responsible for the feeling of inferiority engendered by the above-below relationship. The idea of living on a vertical plane is in its acceptance by individuals the most neuroticizing element of all."

As we go through life, we become more conscious of the fact that there are two ways of movement on the social scene: the horizontal plane and the vertical plane or useful behavior and useless behavior. On the horizontal plane, whatever the person does he moves toward others; he wants something for others; he is interested in others. Useful behavior is that behavior which is turned toward cooperative action for the common good or that which brings advantages to all mankind. On the vertical plane, whatever the person does he is doing

[1] Sicher, Lydia, Reprinted from The Journal of Individual Psychology, Vol. XI, number 2, 1955.

it because he wants to be higher, he wants to be better (than the other fellow). Useless behavior is that behavior which is turned toward promoting self in the hopes that some recognition and/or status may be received or which does not help mankind and does not add to security and thus weakens society. Useless behavior breaks down the bridges between people - it limits and burdens them.

When you are on the vertical plane you go up; nobody who moves on the vertical plane is ever only moving up. He is constantly moving up and down, up and down. One day when he does something good he moves a few notches up; next moment when he makes some mistake, he moves back down again. Up and down, up and down. That is exactly the plane of which most of us move today.

A person who moves on the vertical plane can never be high enough. He has to live with tension and fears and anxieties. He is constantly vulnerable. Others are always catching up or surpassing him. On the vertical plane we have the desire for self-elevation with the constant fear of making mistakes.

Dr. Sicher goes on to say, "Substituting the horizontal plane for the vertical plane of life changes the aspect completely. Here the ideas of superior and inferior have no place; here is no one on a rung of a ladder in fear of being pushed off by the ambitious climber below who wants to take his place. Here is room for everybody. Side by side, each with his own start, his own road, his own goal, individuals can walk together, work together, independently and interdependently, contributing their share to life. Roads will cross or run parallel, but here one has freedom of choice: choice of the road, of the goal, of the partner with whom one wants to walk; here also social consciousness leads to acceptance of the responsibility for one's own actions and co-responsibility for the welfare of others. On this plane, too, courage and self-confidence, the two main principles in freedom, allow for improvement and progress; perhaps some people might be more advanced because they started earlier or walked faster or made fewer detours; but as everyone has his own road, they are no longer competitors to be outdone. The measuring stick is the distance from one's own point of departure. The goal might never be reached, but self-realization is a process, movement, not the goal achieved, but the goal aimed at.

"The horizontal plane affords the possibility of developing one's best potentialities within the world of one's fellow men; it alone allows for the dynamic forging ahead of one and all."

The person who moves on the horizontal plane is constantly moving ahead in the direction he wants to move. He doesn't move up, he moves ahead. He is merely motivated by interest. He doesn't think about his own self-elevation; he is more interested in what he is doing than how it will reflect on him. He is interested in functioning instead of being concerned with his status or prestige.

On the horizontal plane we desire to be useful.

There are four recognized "mistaken goals" that such children pursue without being aware of it. It is essential to understand these

mistaken goals if we attempt to redirect the child into a constructive approach to social living.

Every action of the child has a purpose. His basic aim is to belong and to find his place in the group or family. A well behaved and well adjusted child has found his way toward social acceptance by conforming to the requirements of the group and by making useful contributions such as, helping in the house and yard, washing the car, and running errands. The child who misbehaves believes that his actions will bring him significance. He may direct himself toward getting attention, or he may attempt to demonstrate his power. He may seek revenge or display inadequacy in order to be exempted from any task. Stated more simply the four goals of misbehavior are:[2]

1. AGM - attention Getting Mechanism - to gain attention, to gain recognition, to get service to keep others busy, to make others feel sorry.

2. Power Seeking - to prove his power to defeat adults.

3. Revenge Seeking - to get even or to hurt those who hurt him.

4. Assumed or Real Disability - to display deficiency or inadequacy in order to be left alone. He wants to avoid his deficiency from becoming obvious.

Regardless of which of these four goals he adopts, his misbehavior results from the conviction that this way of acting is the most effective way for him to function and to have a place for himself. The child decides for himself without being conscious of the direction of his behavior.

ATTENTION GETTING MECHANISM

AGM is a technique of gaining the parent's and teacher's attention and service. It is the child's answer to his view of the adult's obligations to keep busy with him. The child seizes every opportunity to make himself the center of attention in the eyes of others.

Dreikurs believes that misbehavior may be either passive or active and may utilize either constructive or destructive methods as well as being useful or useless. He feels that this basic pattern of activity is established early in life and is difficult to change. The four types of behavior patterns Dreikurs uses are:

1. Active - constructive
2. Active - destructive
3. Passive - constructive
4. Passive - destructive

The choice of method the child decides on depends upon his feeling of being accepted or rejected by groups of people. His antagonism is

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[2] Dreikurs, Rudolf; Grunwald, Bronia; Pepper, Floy C.; Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, N.Y., 1971.

always expressed in destructive acts. This feeling of belonging or the lack of it is a decisive factor for the switch from constructive methods to destructive methods.

Active or passive behavior indicates the amount of courage the child possesses. Passivity is always based on personal discouragement. A passive child will not move in the direction of open warfare. If his antagonism is successfully beaten down, he may be discouraged to such an extent that he cannot hope for any significance whatsoever. Similiar conclusions may be reached by a child who considers attention-getting or power as essential, and finds himself unable to obtain it. Then he gives up in discouragement and refuses participation and functioning. In trying to bring about change in behavior, it is relatively easy to change behavior on the attention level or to change a child's destructive methods into constructive ones, but it is extremely difficult to change a passive child into an active one.

Attention getting (goal 1) is the only goal that can be achieved by all four behavior patterns.

I. ACTIVE-CONSTRUCTIVE

The active-constructive AGM resembles a very cooperative and conforming behavior. This child is extremely ambitious to be the first or the best in his activities and his goal orientation is toward success. This child usually has a poor social relationship with their own age group; if they cannot shine, they feel lost. Their desire to be perfect, to be correct, to be superior is often stimulated by overambitious and perfectionistic parents who encourage such traits, sometimes in playing this particular child against other siblings. Competition with others often leads to the development of this striving for applause. In order to maintain his superiority over others, or to match and possibly exceed over everyone else, the child tries to become good, reliable, considerate, cooperative, and industrious, seeking and accepting any possible responsibility.

There are generally three types of youngsters in the active-constructive category.

1. The model child - such as has been described who display their "goodness" to gain recognition. However, unless their "goodness" is recognized as being better than others, they will stop being good.

> Dorrie, age 8, was an especially "good" girl. She always did the work assigned to her by the teacher. She usually finished her work and then constantly asked the teacher, "What can I do to help you?" or "See, I finished all my work."
>
> During lunch time, Dorrie came into the classroom and busied herself with extra projects or reports. She always called her teacher's attention to the projects. Her teacher was very pleased with Dorrie and often said, "If only the rest of the class was as good as Dorrie!"

In the above example, most adults would not look at Dorrie's behavior as an act of misbehavior. However, let us look more closely at her actions. She always called the teacher's attention to her

"good" behavior, "See how good I am." She was doing the work purely for the teacher's approval and not because she really wanted to learn. She was doing the right things for the wrong reasons. This teacher was not aware of Dorrie's mistaken goal and unwittingly reinforced her.

The Dorrie type of child is usually spoken of in glowing terms as, "Such a lovely child," or "She is such a nice girl" and is usually labeled as the "Teacher's Pet" or as "Mother's Favorite."

Such behavior is on the useful side of life and the child is cooperating but only on her terms. However, it is termed a misbehavior because this is the child's way of demanding teacher attention. As the child elevates herself, she is also saying, "See how bad the other are."

Adults need to find small intimate and personal ways to show the child attention, and that he is important. Often a wink, a squeeze on the arm, a pat on the back, or an unexpected treat will suffice. The child may find means or mechanisms to get the desired attention if such methods are not employed.

2. Some children use overconscientiousness as a technique to gain approval and to demonstrate their moral superiority over others. As long as the other people submit to the child's demand for constant approval and reassurance, conformity is maintained. Sooner or later people refuse to meet his exaggerated demands and the child may then use active-destructive methods. Unusual ambition and a great ability to rationalize can move a child to cloak his striving for superiority and power as overconscientiousness. He does everything asked of him, but in such a way that the opposite is accomplished and he does it under the guise of good intentions. He demonstrates an excessive love of order to conceal his struggle against order.

He has homework to do. If you stop him because it's past bedtime, he is naturally unprepared the next day and fails the test.

3. A good number of children are conspicious because of their ability to express themselves in a striking or unusual way. They constantly make bright remarks. He says something "cute" and the adults laugh and boast about them. The child then rejoices in his ability and starts to turn out bright remarks on a big scale. He may become a "chatterbox" and develop an urge to talk as a way to gain recognition. Tattling (a specialized form of talking) serves to raise a feeling of personal prestige. These children quite often blurt out confidences because then they can become sensational by saying what should have been left unsaid.

As was mentioned, the active constructive AGM resembles a very cooperative and conforming behavior. The difference is that in this case the good behavior of a child exists only for the purpose of getting attention - it will turn into misbehavior if the child does not receive the desired attention. Then he may try active-destructive methods. This type of behavior may resemble that used to achieve the second or third goal, and distinguishes itself from it only by the lack of violence and antagonism. The child still seeks only attention

and the fight stops when this goal is achieved. The child who wants to demonstrate his power is not satisfied with mere attention; he wants his way.

II. ACTIVE-DESTRUCTIVE

The active-destructive child is one who may be impertinent, defiant, clownish, or bullying. There are five main types of youngsters in this category:

1. The showoff are ambitious children who are discouraged in the field of tangible, useful achievement, may use the most bizarre means to put themselves in the foreground and attract attention and experience importance only when they have succeeded in shocking people. The weird ideas that occur to children are often astounding and amusing.

> Jimmy, eighteen months old, was playing quietly and contently with his toys. A friend dropped by to see his mother. After a few minutes, Jimmy climbed up on the fireplace hearth and paraded back and forth, jabbering, talking loud, and throwing his arms around. The friend stopped talking to the mother and talked to Jimmy. He immediately stopped. After a few more minutes of adult interaction, Jimmy again started his "soap box oratory."

2. The obstrusive child frequently takes the form of "bediviling" the grownups. In this way, he makes his presence felt and keeps his family on edge.

3. The Enfant Terrible children have the ability to draw attention to themselves under every circumstance, and they succeed in the simplest way: by breaking the unwritten laws of tact and convention wherever they can. Often these children are especially attractive because of their intelligence and wit, and the charm with which they dramatize themselves. Their strategy is to do nothing that is expressly forbidden, but to carry the permissible to extremes. This child is extremely sly and clever. Adults scold them, but they laugh at their tricks and this of course spurs them on to bigger and better achievements of the same sort.

4. The Walking Question Mark makes himself conspicious through questioning, many of which he knows the answer.

5. Instability -- an unstable child puts no stock in the value of persistence. His courage is limited, he gives up easily and turns to the next project. His first exaggerated enthusiasm reveals his pessimism. This child is not interested in doing, but in getting as much as possible with the least effort.

III. PASSIVE-CONTRUCTIVE

Some children are more passive in their actions, but also operate on the useful side of life. The passive-constructive child achieves his goals by being charming and receiving special attention for what he is and not for what he does. They are more concerned with how "cute" and how "pretty" they are. They just have to look and everybody falls for their tricks. They use their helplessness and weakness to put others into their service; but they do it so charmingly that nobody resents going out of his way to do everything for them. They never disturb or destroy because then they would lose their power.

They may tend to become scheming, and are actually completely concerned with themselves, while they appear to be interested only in others.

There are two main types of youngsters in the passive-constructive category:

1. The clinging vine needs help, clings to people.

2. Vanity type -- these are youngsters who are admired just for what they are and not for what they can do and are invited to become vain. Vanity is encouraged by remarks of adults who praise the childs appearance. The evolving lack of confidence in their ability makes them only more dependent on the approval of others and increases their vanity. This lead to conflict as they demand more attention and contribute less. Vain children cannot bear to yield precedence to anyone, and therefore, sidestep any situation in which they cannot excel.

> Shirley was a very attractive child who was very conscious of her looks. She had several little tricks with which she got people to admire her. She would stand and tug slightly on her long blonde curls and people would say, "Doesn't Shirley have beautiful hair," as they patted her on the head. Another time she would look shyly down her cheeks and then up to the adult who would comment on the gorgeous long eyelashes. Another trick she used was to caress her dress which again the adult would respond to. When asked to do something, Shirley would sigh deeply and bat her eyes and the adults would fall all over themselves to be the one who helped her.

This type of child is not interested in or concerned with doing anything productive, but only wants attention, admiration, and service. In her own way she is trying to "please" people. Their pleasantness, charm and submission cause the observer to overlook the discouragement behind their passivity and dependence on others.

The tendency to lean on others sooner or later gives way to disturbed relationships. As long as they can please, all is well; but when a situation does not permit pleasing, their good manners end. They may first become destructive in order to attract attention. If that fails, they may easily move to the third group of children whose exaggerated desire to be liked may lead them to the assumption that they are not liked at all. Many dependent children turn into hostile and even cruel beings when they find that their charm no longer works.

On the surface of things, "useful" behavior looks as if the child is doing what he is doing for the good of others or to be useful. However, when we examine the situation, we discover that the child is trying to reach his particular goal. Both Dorrie and Shirley were concerned with themselves. As a rule, people are only important to children like Dorrie and Shirley when they contribute to their personal elevation and attention.

The passive-constructive AGM is found more readily in girls than in boys. We have a tendency to overlook the greater discouragement of the passive-constructive children as compared to the active-destructive.

The passive-constructive child is less unpleasant, but needs more assistance for the development of self-confidence and courage. A child who seeks attention with passive-destructive methods may very well end up in the fourth group of completely discouraged children.

IV. PASSIVE-DESTRUCTIVE

The passive-destructive child is characterized as lazy and may manifest his laziness in actions ranging from an ineffectual response to total inaction. Through their behavior, they force other people to be concerned with them and help them. To get an answer takes time and effort.

The misbehavior and misdeeds as well as the acceptable behavior of a child are used to keep adults involved and concerned with him. When these methods do not bring him the recognition he desires, when younger siblings steal the show, or when the adults expect him to give up childish behavior, he may then try any conceivable method to get what he wants or thereby gain some recognition. He may make a pest of himself, tattle, become untidy, and do many other misbehaviors.

> Sonja, age 7, was a petite, lovable little girl. She had learned to get her way by being "cute" or by using tears. When confronted with a task that was difficult or not to her liking, she would elicit help from the adults or peers in her environment. If help or sympathy was not forthcoming, then Sonja turned on the "water power."
>
> One evening Ron, 9 and Sonja were to do the dinner dishes. Ron was busily engaged in washing the dishes and cleaning the table. Sonja very slowly picked up the towel and said, "I don't want to dry the dishes." Not a word was said. Sonja waited a minute or two then began to cry softly, making sure that both Ron and mother were aware of her tears.

Sonja is using "dependency" as a demand for service. Her key words are "I can't," "Help me," and "I don't know how." With these phrases she get fantastic service and special treatment. In the example above, Sonja tries to get others to do the task for her or tries to get others to feel sorry for her. However, you will note that the mother did not give Sonja the sympathy that she was looking for and in fact, said nothing! Smart mother!

> In school, Sonja uses the same tactics.
>
> Sonja was given an assignment of studying her reading cards and preparing for her reading lesson. The other students were busy with their work. Sonja picked up the cards and started to cry. A couple of the boys became concerned and asked Sonja what was wrong. She shook her head and said, "Nothing, the words are too hard for me." The boys called the teacher's attention to Sonja. At this point, Sonja started to cry a little louder.
>
> The teacher was aware that Sonja's purpose was to involve the teacher and to get special or preferential treatment. The teacher told the boys that it was Sonja's problem. They agreed and immediately went back to work. The teacher then said,

"Sonja, close the door if you are going to make all that noise!" Since the teacher did not fall for Sonja's "bait," Sonja stopped her crying within a day or two.

Not all mothers or teachers would have handled these situations in such a manner. They would probably get caught up in feeling sorry for Sonja and lessen or change the task thereby reinforcing Sonja's pattern of crying.

There are five or more types of behavior in this category:

1. Bashfulness, through their behavior, these children force other people to be concerned with them and help them. Bashful children dread ridicule. With the aid of their timidity, they strive to evade any situation in which they may have to play an active role. Still they demand and expect everybody to pay attention to them.

2. Dependency and untidiness. These children always need someone to tell them and remind them what to do and finally to do everything for them. Untidiness is first developed as a trick or device. The child recognizes the advantage of not getting up on time, failing to wash and dress himself, being late for meals and school, refusing to put away his toys, or not going to bed at a set hour. In these ways he wins victories in his struggle and secures the attention he wishes.

3. Lack of concentration and stamina. Many children try to take refuge behind frailty and use it as a means of making adults their slaves.

4. Self-indulgence and frivolity. These children want preferential treatment and to get as much as possible out of other people.

5. Anxiety and fear is an expression of helplessness. The child feels his helplessness, and this fear takes form in his susceptibility to fear, and we sympathize with his helplessness, and we respond to his fear. The child learns to use his fear reactions to achieve his personal goals.

Eating difficulties, speech impediments and reading difficulties are often found in this type of child.

The passive-destructive child behavior is unpleasant and annoying, yet one cannot be indifferent to them.

There are many different techniques of handling attention getting behavior. The ones used most commonly are: ignoring the behavior, giving attention for positive behaviors, and doing the unexpected. The techniques used varies with the child and with the situation. The following are other techniques that work well with specific behaviors:

1. Logical consequences is probably the single best technique to use.

2. Place a carpet square under the desk of the foot tapper.

3. Ask Johnny how many times he wants attention, "How about 15 times." "No." "OK, how about 10 times." The child agrees as to how many times. During the course of the day, the teacher at her own convenience would say, Johnny 1, about 5-10 minutes later, Johnny 2, and so forth until she has met the agreement. She has given Johnny the attention he asked for, but on her own terms.

4. Group discussion - let the group help you.

Children who drive for attention must learn to become independent by recognizing that contributing and not receiving is the effective instrument for obtaining social status. Within all four groups of the AGM, the attempt should be made to help all children to become active and to change destructive methods into constructive ones, until the child is able to overcome the need for any special attention.

Children who drive for power or superiority should not be exposed to power and to pressure against which they have successfully rebelled and still rebel. Acknowledging their value and even their power is essential for making them self-confident so that they may no longer need their power drive. They must learn that power is less important than being useful.

Whenever the child's efforts to gain social status by attracting attention fails, a new phase of social relationships begins. In most instances it is a struggle for power. By being able to do what he is not supposed to do and refusing to do what is required of him, the child challenges your power and tries to make himself a potent force within the group.

Unpleasant by-products of humiliation, punishment, or even physical pain do not matter as long as his main purpose is achieved. Children prefer being beaten to being ignored. The little girl who acts up when company comes or the little boy who bangs on the piano when his parents want to talk are asking to be noticed. Both children know they will be reprimanded, but even punishment is accepted as a form of getting attention. It is certainly preferable to being ignored!

POWER SEEKING

Power seeking means trying to overcome and control the opposition. Power seeking means defiance.

A power driven child may outwardly display high spirits, inflated self-esteem, and even a sense of superiority, but he is actually deeply discouraged. His refusal to "knuckle under" is a front to save his pride. If it is difficult to resist the child's provocation when he seeks attention, it is even more difficult to restrain oneself when he strives for power. The child tries to force adults into a struggle.

Sam, age 10, refused to work on his English assignment. He said it was too hard for him to do and, "I'm not going to do it." His teacher said, "Oh, yes you are. Get busy right now." Sam

kicked at the desk and yanked his books and papers around and said, "No, I won't." His teacher jerked him by the shoulder and said, "You heard what I said, now get to work." Sam jerked away from his teacher and ran out of the school building.

Efforts by the adults to "control" the child may lead to a struggle for power. Trying to pull a power driven child down from his "high horse" only increases his underlying sense of inferiority and futility. No final "victory" of adults is possible. In most cases the child will "win out" as he is not restricted in his fighting methods by any sense of responsibility or moral obligations. He will argue, cry, contradict, have temper tantrums, masturbate, lie, become stubborn, disobedient, and a host of other misbehaviors in order to prove to you that he is the "boss;" that he can do what he wants to do; that he is the stronger; that he doesn't have to do what you want him to do; that he has a right to be "top dog."

Joe, age 9, used withdrawal tactics and refusal to do his assignments as a method to control his environment. One day Joe refused to do his Math assignment. His teacher explained to him that his desk was for work. If he was not going to work, then he could not sit there. He could sit on a mat on the floor. For three days, Joe sat on the mat and did nothing. The fourth day he came in and went to work.

By refusing to "fight" with Joe over him not doing his work, the teacher removed "her sail from his wind." She refused to become emotionally involved. By doing this, the teacher changed the stage from one of rebellion and fighting to the issue of order. She moved the issue to a neutral ground and on her terms.

The first obstacle toward an application of a conflict solving technique is the widespread assumption that the adult has to subdue the defiant child, to show him who is boss and "make" him respect law and order. The second stumbling block is the adult's personal involvement in a power conflict. The teacher cannot avoid the conflict if she is not free from the feeling of inadequacy and concern with her own prestige. No conflict can be resolved as long as she is afraid of being humiliated, taken advantage of and personally defeated.

After a teacher has decided to avoid both fighting and giving in, which is the first step in conflict solving, she then can concern herself with the issue at hand. What makes a child strive for power? A power drunk child is always ambitious. But his ambition is directed almost exclusively at the defeat of the power of those who try to suppress him. It is more difficult for an over-ambitious child to be on top academically or socially. But his success in defeating adults brings him considerable status among his peers. It is, naturally, a mistaken idea about how to be significant; but the frantic efforts of authorities to suppress any sign of defiance and nonconformity only provides greater gratification to those children who clamor for what they consider their "rights."

The next step in an effort to solve conflicts is the realization that one cannot demand changes from children, as long as one is in agreement to fight it out. The degree of rebellion is usually in

direct proportion to the degree of autocratic imposition; both parties are alike and equal in their destructive tenacity. To add to the problem the classroom teacher is either supported by parents to bear down on the reluctant learner or condemned by others for their inability to teach and influence their children.

The crucial question is, however, what can a teacher do in the immediate situation when she is challenged by a defiant and power-bent child?

1. The cardinal rule is to avoid a fight. The teacher can admit her defeat openly by saying, "Could it be that you want to show me that I can't make you do your assignment? You are right, I can't make you." This, far from increasing the child's desire to fight will make him more willing to give it up. There is no sense in challenging an authority who doesn't feel challenged! As with Joe and the Math assignment, the teacher avoided a fight by reminding Joe that the desk was a place of work and business and if no work was forthcoming, he would have to move.

2. The teacher could ask the class in group discussion for help. She could say, "You know, Joe seems to have a problem in not doing his Math. Do you have any ideas about how we could help Joe with this problem?" or "We seem to have a problem with Joe not doing his Math. What do you think is the matter?" Let the children give their ideas and someone will say, "He's just showing off." or "He wants to be boss." or "He wants you to make him do it." At this point the teacher has two ways to lead the discussion. She can deal with the idea of "What do you think we can do to help Joe?" or she can deal with the idea of, "Make him do it! Do any of you think I could really make Joe do his assignment?" Continue the discussion from there. The pressure of peers is much more potent than the pressure of the teacher. Such discussions can have considerable effect in helping the child to see the premise from which he operates. But this can be done only when the teacher refuses to be drawn into a power struggle as to who is right and who is wrong.

The need to demonstrate power may reach the point where the child decides to seek revenge and retaliation. Generally the two main ideas to keep in mind are the use of action without words and to extricate oneself by withdrawal or removal from the scene. It is important to realize that the use of logical consequences is not as applicable to the power driven child. In fact, it usually increases the struggle.

REVENGE SEEKING

Revenge seeking means trying to "get even" and to punish others for a wrong or a hurt (which may be either real or imagined). Desire for revenge can easily overlap. If a child is convinced that he has the right to do whatever he pleases, and anyone who tries to stop him is his enemy, he may decide on revenge. This is the more probable if the adult has responded to his bid for power by punishment; then the child will come to the point of retaliation. Dealing with a child bent on revenge constitutes one of the most serious problems for the adult. These children are inaccessible to reason. Convinced that they are hopelessly disliked and have no chance with the group, they respond

with deep distrust to any effort to convince him otherwise. The adult is exposed to all kinds of very well-designed provocations to hurt her which makes it difficult for her to convince the child that he is worthwhile and can be liked.

The revenge seeking child demonstrates that he feels unlovable, unacceptable, and unwanted. His answer to these feelings are his actions toward others. He may wet the bed, bully the younger children and show a great deal of destructive behavior such as, destroying his toys, breaking mother's favorite vase, writing on the walls, messing up cosmetics, stuffing things in the toilet, B.M.'s in the middle of the floor, tearing and cutting up clothing, painting the face of the clocks, smearing nailpolish on the toilet seats, and other such acts.

> Harold, age 10, was examining the contents of his Aunt Josie's trunk. It was filled with such interesting things as Auntie had just returned from abroad. Harold was fascinated with all the cosmetics, the brightly colored silks, and the highly scented perfumes. Aunt Josie came into the room and berated Harold for spilling her powders and messing up her silks. She hit him on the head several times and called him a sneaky thief. The next day, Harold slipped into her closet and cut the buttons off all her dresses.

> Mitch, age 7½, was a very bright boy who was having his troubles in school. He ran away from school several times, was not at all cooperative and thrived on adult company. However, when adults made demands of him he became quite angry as "they" had no right to ask anything of <u>him</u>! One day the school psychologist was at school and tested Mitch. Later in the day, the custodian happened to be mowing the school yard. He noticed that a front tire was flat and that nails had been placed at an angle in front of the back tires in such a manner that if the psychologist moved the car forward, the nails would have punctured the tires.

In both of these examples, the revenge or retaliation was aimed directly at the person with whom the child was involved. Many times, a child will strike back in a totally different situation.

> One day Jessie, a 7th grader, came to Home Economics class and during the course of the period, cut a big hole from the center of another girl's fabric. In discussing this incident with Jessie, it became apparent that she was angry with her mother and quite regularly did destructive acts for which her mother had to pay.

The increasing violence of the parent and adult against the child's use of power intensifies the conflict and leads to the child's trying to get even and becomes revenge. <u>TO GET EVEN BECOMES THE ONLY WAY TO FEEL SIGNIFICANT</u>. The child becomes more vicious and counteracts parental and adult resistance by stealing, self abuse, and assault, setting fires, and committing more and more destructive acts such as, breaking windows, denting the car with a hammer, or smashing the T.V.

Revenge seeking is one of the most difficult behaviors to change and usually involves a considerable length of time. First, the teacher must keep in mind what she should not do. She should not retaliate or become emotionally upset. She will need to make a special effort to show respect to the child and to herself. She cannot help a revengeful child unless she realizes how much he suffers. It is exactly the hurt he felt which prompts him to hurt others. For this reason, the teacher has to generate an attitude of understanding and assistance. It may be difficult to evoke it; but it is essential not only for the sake of the child, but for the morale of the entire class. Instead of pitching one against the other, we have to teach children that each one is his brother's keeper.

One pitfall for the well-meaning teacher is to treat the disturbed child with preference in order to show him that he can be liked and appreciated. In this way she may exert a good influence on him--but at what expense? She intensifies the rift with the rest of the class which resents such preferential treatment, and she makes it impossible for any other teacher to be acceptable to him unless she too makes a special fuss over him and caters to him.

The teacher can solicit the help of some child, preferably one with high esteem, to take special interst in the outcast, drawing him into the group, demonstrating appreciation. In this way, it is often possible to build slowly a bridge across the hateful and, most of all, fearful barrier which such a child has put up between himself and society. Teacher and children need to give each other moral support in this endeavor less they become discouraged. The antagonism which a revengeful child shows in the face of friendliness and kindness is understandable, but it is difficult to withstand. To convince someone that one wants to be his friend when he is convinced that he cannot trust anyone, requires fortitude and persistence. Often, in the moment when one believes one has gained the child's confidence, he puts you to a test by provoking in the most outrageous manner. Here is an example:

> Tom, age 15, was a holy terror, and notorious for that in the community. His destructiveness was so well designed that it always occurred in a crucial moment. The children were giving a play. Just the night before, he destroyed the piano, or on another occasion, the stage sets. After consulting with the staff, it was recommended that the teacher concerned with theater productions befriend Tom because his acts of destruction showed his interest in the theater. He should let Tom help him in stage designing and so forth. For a while this really seemed to turn the trick. Tom was interested in what they were doing and kept out of trouble. Then something strange happened. The teacher couldn't understand it. He was working with Tom, putting his watch on the table next to him. Suddenly Tom grabbed the watch and put it in his pocket. The teacher did not know what to do. So he told Tom that somebody must have taken his watch. Tom was furious; how could anybody do something like that to the teacher, who proposed that they should look around for someone who may have taken it. So they went around the school trying to find out who had taken the teacher's watch. Finally Tom could no longer stand it and returned the watch

saying, "You knew all the time that I took it." That was the last provocation. But what did it mean?

This was a well-designed test which the teacher passed with flying colors. Normally, one would have asked Tom to return the watch immediately. And that would have been the start of a big fight. Tom would have denied it, despite the obviousness of his act, the teacher would have insisted and threatened, perhaps to get the watch forcibly, and the battle would rage, and all the good work he had done would have been lost. One must be prepared in dealing with such children, that such tests are almost inevitable. Whereas children who pursue goal 1 or 2 are usually not aware of the purpose of their behavior, children who feel hurt and disliked are often very much aware that they want to get even. They do not know, however, that they view almost every situation with suspicion and they will again be the victims. They disregard experiences which point to the contrary and they do not know that they provoke the experiences to which they respond with hostility. In provoking others to abuse them, they display a kind of "moral superiority," looking down on those who are wrong and who by their action are responsible for their own misbehavior. Then they are more than ever convinced that they are right in their conviction and justified in their retaliation. These are psychological factors which can and should be discussed by the teacher in her class discussion.

ASSUMED DISABILITY

An assumed or real disability is used by the child to protect himself against the demands of life. The child employs the cloak of inadequacy in order to be left alone. This behavior may characterize all actions of a child or it may only appear in situations to avoid activities where he feels deficient.

Overcoming a child's discouragement is the most common and urgent task for the teacher. In almost all poor performances, be they social or academic, the child expresses his discouragement. Many times a teacher gives up easily when her first attempts in trying a new technique ends in failure. So it is with children who are having difficulty socially and academically.

Children who are extremely discouraged, defeated, and have assumed the role of being "a blob" usually operate from three premises.

Premises:

1. Over-ambition - can't do as well as he wants to do.
2. Competition - can't do as well as others.
3. Pressure - don't do as well as he ought to do.

Frustrated overambition is perhaps the most frequent cause for giving up. The desire to be superior and excellent may bring about the amount of despair where the child sees no chance to be as good as he wants to be. The feeling of personal superiority sooner or later gives way to cold feet. If he cannot be first, have the best grades, be mother's favorite child, be the leader of the group, be the homecoming queen, or the football hero, he will reach the point of giving up and

will refuse to put forth any effort.

> Frank, age 7, was working on his writing assignment. His paper was not the best in the class, but was fairly neat and legible. However, he erased his work, redid it, and erased it again. It was not done well enough to suit him. Consequently, he never did finish his assignment. As a first grader, Frank "gave up" and refused to put forth any effort.

The child who assumes disability because of his overambition will not participate in an activity which does not provide him with the opportunity to prove his superiority. For this reason, many parents and teachers find it difficult to accept a psychological interpretation of overambition in a child who does not try at all. Probably the only way to help such a child is by making him aware of how he defeats himself.

The Competitive child is convinced that he has no chance to do as well as others. This child has always been impressed with the fact that he is not "good enough as he is" and has always been pushed to do better. Parents in trying to motivate their child, constantly say defeating things as:

"Why can't you be as good as your sister?"
"Why don't you get higher marks, like Mary?"
"When I was your age, I was riding a two wheeler."

> Jennie, age 10, felt that she was "no good" and was also "stupid." Her mother said to her, "You can't learn, you are too stupid." Jenny was convinced that she could not learn and therefore would not try. When a request was made of her she would reply, "I can't, I'm too "dumb."

Some children may respond by withdrawing as they are actually unable to keep up with others. The sense of being less than others and the conviction of not being good enough bears no relation to the child's ability.

The Pressured child who is constantly criticized by adults finds that whatever he does isn't good as the adults think it ought to be. "Passing the course" or making a "B" is not enough for parents. Adults quite often say defeating and discouraging remarks as:

"You can do better than that."
"You are not cleaning your room as often as you ought to."
"You only had two home runs, you should have had more."

> Rich, age 8, was having problems in school. He could not accept making mistakes. He also did not like to participate in sports. His mother told him, "Why can't you do as good in school as Steve. He always gets a 100 on his papers and you always miss 1 or 2." His father told him, "You shouldn't have missed that ball, Steve wouldn't have missed it. I know you stopped two sizzlers, but you should have gotten that other one."

Some parents and teachers also discourage at a non-verbal level. Their facial expressions, shoulder shrugs and disapproving looks are as defeating to the child as their verbal remarks.

Adults need to convey to the child that he is "good enough" as he is. They need to remove the pressure by being less critical, less fault-finding, and less picky. They need to give the child time to solve problems and to perform at his own speed. They need to allow time for the child to learn a skill so that he can improve his rate of performance.

In order to help these children, the adult must use the process of encouragement. It may be difficult for the adult, , but it is essential for his corrective ability that he watch very carefully for every critical, condemning, or disapproving and impatient sign in his reactions. The difficulty lies in the fact that the discouraged child is very prone to impart his conviction of inadequacy to the adults. Any deficiency must be met with methods which will not perpetuate or increase it. To avoid this, the adult must be aware of his contribution to the deterioration of the child's ability. Students who fail, instill in their adults the anticipation that they will fail again, which in turn, confirms the child's doubt in his ability and hinders his progress.

Encouragement is an action which conveys to the child that the teacher respects, trusts, and believes in him and that his present lack of skills in no way diminishes his value as a person. Encouragement demands continuous alertness for the right moment, tone of voice and choice of words. For a discouraged child, even the slightest proof of success is a great booster, for he had never experienced success and was convinced that he never would. Even this little success, can be a tremendous help to the adult and to the group to build on for it is really the foundation on which all can stand firmly without feeling hypercritical in giving recognition.

Inherent in the process of encouragement is the concept of developing a basic trust between the adult and the child, as mutual trust is the foundation upon which good interpersonal relationships are built. A child's trust often preceded his gaining confidence in himself. The general state of trust implies that the child has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the adult and that he may trust himself in his transactions with the adult. Then he is able to consider himself trustworthy enough so that the adult will remain constant in his relationship.

Encouragment must be realistic. Recognition should be given for real accomplishments, no matter how slight they may be.

RECOGNIZING THE FOUR GOALS OF MISBEHAVIOR

The child cries out through his behavior. Insight into how and why the child behaves as he does can only be attained by understanding the goals he pursues. The ability to recognize the Four Goals can help adults to equalize the inequities that arise in adult-child relationship.

As adults check their first reactions to the child's behavior, they are able to see the intentions of the child's behavior. It is

the reaction the adults have at the time the behavior occurs that indicates to them the goal of the child. The child's goal may occasionally vary with circumstances: he may act to attract attention at one moment, and assert his power or seek revenge at another. He may also obtain his goal by different techniques; and conversely, the same behavior pattern may be used for different purposes. Its dynamics can be generally recognized by the effect it has on others, and by their reaction.

GOAL 1 - Attention -- Feelings of annoyance may indicate that the child is seeking attention. If the child responds when spoken to and the action stops, usually the goal is attention. (Sort of resembles a fly, you swat at it and it goes away for a time, but eventually comes back and you swat it again.) However, if the action continues after reprimand it may be considered a symptom of a stronger goal.

GOAL 2 - Power -- When adults feel challenged and feel inclined to prove to the child that they can make him do it, they may be sure that the child's goal is power. Usually a reprimand intensifies the behavior. During a power struggle, no interrelationship is too trivial to be used as an opportunity for challenge. Any pressure results in the child's fighting back and showing extreme aggressiveness. Adults who deal with this type of child feel personally challenged and tend to react with the feeling that they will show the child that they can control him.

GOAL 3 - Revenge -- Adults feeling of hurt and resentment are indicative of the goal revenge. The child does things to hurt them. Children who use revenge need to be convinced that they can be liked.

GOAL 4 - Displaying Inadequacy -- When adults feel like saying "I don't know what to do with you" it is usually indicative that the child has sought to impress the adult with his inability so that the child can give up functioning and responsibility. The child impresses the adult with the incapacities and, as a result, the adult characteristically throws up his hands in complete despair and permits the child to withdraw.

In the same way, response to correction discloses the child's motives. His response to the adults efforts to control him reveal his goal. The child who wants attention stops his disturbance when he receives attention. When he is challenging authority, the adult's desire to have him control his actions only brings about stronger resistance. The child who seeks to get even, may become even more hostile and violent at the adult's attempts to stop his behavior. In other words, the child's reaction to corrective efforts provides clues about the purpose of his behavior.

CHILD'S MISTAKEN GOALS*

Floy C. Pepper, Instructor

Goal of Misbehavior	What child is saying	How parent feels	Child's reaction to reprimand	Some corrective measures
ATTENTION	I only count when I am being noticed or served	Annoyed Wants to remind, coax Delighted with "good" child	Temporarily stops disturbing action when given attention	Ignore Answer or do the unexpected Give attention at pleasant times
POWER	I only count when I am dominating, when you do what I want you to do	Provoked Generally wants power Challenged "I'll make him do it." "You can't get away with it."	Intensifies action when reprimanded Child wants to win, be boss	Extricate self Act, not talk Be friendly Establish equality Redirect child's efforts into constructive channels
REVENGE	I can't be liked, I don't have power, but I'll count if I can hurt others as I feel hurt by life	Hurt, mad "How could he do this to me?"	Wants to get even Makes self disliked	Extricate self Win child Maintain order with minimum restraint Avoid retaliations Take time and effort to help child
INADEQUACY	I can't do anything right so I won't try to do anything at all; I am no good	Despair "I give up	No reprimand, therefore, no reaction Feels there is no use to try Passive	Encouragement (may take long) Faith in child's ability

* Chart designed by Corvallis Oregon Mother Study Group